Social Status of the Moaga Woman and Work Assigned to Her

562 The Moaga woman is regarded as a veritable beast of burden. Household duties and the weaving of cotton for her own and her husband's clothes are not her only occupations. [183] She helps her husband cultivate the family field, and she has her own plots for peanuts, beans, etc.

She endures wretched treatment and must always submit to her husband's whims. She enjoys no consideration whatever and is never called upon to give an opinion. The husband alone rules the home.

[842] If she is so unfortunate as to have no children, she is regarded with scorn. She carries the loads when a move is in progress. A [482] basket and a pyramid of gourds containing her effects and those of her husband are balanced on her head, while the husband canters beside her on a horse or takes his ease on a donkey. If he is afoot, he carries only his quiver, his arrows, his bow, and a club.

To be sure, the Moaga woman may express in unpleasant words her resentment of the maltreatment to which she is subjected, because the Mossi admit that she has no weapon other than her tongue. This is what is meant by the saying, "A woman's mouth is her quiver."

Conjugal Life

834 Interdictions and permissible acts. The couple is forbidden to have sexual relations at the following times.

834 1. For a period of not less than two years and a half after the
853 birth of a child to safeguard the baby's life. Indeed, it is believed that each child comes into the world with its own supply of milk, and if another child were to be conceived during the nursing period [184] the first would die because the milk of the newborn child would be fatal to him.

834 2. During the menstrual period. The reason for this prohibition
841 that the husband's fetishes and charms lose part of their "power" after relations at this time.

834 3. A pregnant woman visits her husband during the first six or
843 seven months. All relations then cease until some time after the delivery, as indicated above.

843 4. A pregnant woman must not step over her husband; this would make him ill.

833 5. The sexual act may be performed with impunity in the courtyard of a dwelling (at night). Otherwise, it is expressly forbidden to do it outside the house and in any way other than lying on a mat or Peulh secco, in any case never directly on the ground.

845 837 847 6. The delivery will be difficult and complicated if the child was conceived in adultery. If the woman is to be delivered, it is absolutely necessary that she confess the name of her accomplice in the presence of witnesses. In this case, if the husband demands it -- and he always does -- the newborn child is killed by the erring wife immediately after it is born (1). [185]

> 1. The procedure is as follows. Some young mothers simply twist its neck and strangle it. Others put the baby in a jar of lukewarm water. The baby instinctively drinks and finally drowns.

837 684 Adultery. Before the arrival of the French, adultery committed by the nakomsé (descendants of naba) was punished by the death of the guilty couple. Among ordinary Mossi, the culprit was simply banished from the family.

However, if the lover was not a relative of the woman's husband, he was forbidden henceforth to come to the village where the woman lived. If he failed to observe this rule, he risked being killed.

837 As a general rule, a Moaga woman takes a lover in a village some distance away from her husband's village and not far from her own. When she asks her husband's permission to visit her family, she profits by the opportunity to spend some time with her lover or to let him know that she is going to her parents' home.

Dissolution of Marriage. Divorce.

586 842 A divorce may be imposed by a husband who no longer loves his wife, but neither ill-health nor sterility may be invoked for the purpose. In the latter case, it is simply assumed that God does not want the woman to have children. She is often regarded with scorn, but sometimes no attention is paid to her lack of children.

641 as part of the family.

641 167 2. When a Moaga emigrates and settles permanently in a foreign country, either to take up trading or to study the precepts of Islam. He is forced to abandon his usual customs and to scorn ancestral ways, thus losing his personal status. If he wishes to embrace Islam, he changes his name, and if he should return to his native village, he would no longer try to be identified as a Moaga, whose customs and beliefs he no longer shares and whom he now regards as an inferior.

641 [188] As has been noted, the Moaga woman who marries a foreigner or the foreign woman who marries a Moaga subject retains her own nationality. Thus, marriage does not involve any loss of nationality. Customs may have been modified, but it is certain that even a Moaga woman who had lived abroad for a long time would soon resume the customs and practices of her own country. The same may be said of a foreign woman who might divorce her Moaga husband and return to her own land.

Naturalization. Since naturalization is unknown, children born in Mossi country of a foreign father and either a Moaga or a foreign mother remain foreign. Furthermore, since children take their father's nationality, a divorce will not affect their status.

II. Birth

842 178 Conception. The natives have no very well-defined idea of the process of conception. In their minds, the primary cause is God (Wenam), Master of Heaven and Earth, who gives children. It seems, however, that Wendé or Wenam forces the kinkirsi (spirits) to change into a human egg when the sperm is transmitted at the time of ejaculation.

The kinkirsi are invisible beings said to resemble small children and who live near certain houses or [189] groves. Only a few favored persons can see them.

In the same connection, it is believed that ancestors or certain deceased relatives are reincarnated.

843 Pregnancy. It is known that complete cessation of menstruation and the development and darkening of the breasts are the signs of

843 pregnancy in a woman. It is also known that the woman will give birth in nine months, but since it is impossible to be sure of the date of delivery, the pregnant woman is watched over constantly and is under the surveillance of the old women. In a general way, nature is allowed to take its course, but some people prefer to consult the soothsayers and the priests and to give alms and sacrifices to avoid a miscarriage. [178] 782]

During pregnancy, women are forbidden to eat honey and, in general, any sweet foods.

Seguene-vando (from seguene, "to wear a skirt," and vando, "leaves, branches"). A few months after the cessation of menstruation, the pregnant woman is sent into the kim-dogo (hut of the kimsé, manes of the ancestors) at the home of the family elder. There she is completely disrobed, and branches are tied around her loins.

844 Delivery. Delivery takes place in the woman's own hut. There is no special preparation. [190] Old women who have had much practice help the mother while others heat water in which to cleanse the newborn child of all impurities.

No one except the old women is present during the delivery. [842] Women who have not yet borne children are sent away, and for good reason since the sight of the birth process might make them sterile.

Finally, if the afterbirth does not come out at the time of birth or soon after, there are certain special measures taken to hasten its emergence.

846 Three or four days after the delivery, depending on whether the child is a boy or a girl, the mother, who has so far remained indoors, goes out for the first time.

She carries a sickle to ward off ghosts and other evil spirits.

The new mother's co-wives and relatives bring her safandé (soap), kamé (karite butter), and kalgo (soumbala); others give her cowries. The father has a sheep or rooster killed and a millet cake prepared.

The woman who acted as midwife is sent a ball of sagbo (millet mush) and a chicken leg. The heads of the mother and child are [307] partially shaved, and there is nothing else to do but to choose a name for the child. [191]

553 Choice of a name. Among the Mossi, a child's personal name depends on circumstances which preceded the birth or on an important

553 event associated with it. We shall classify children under two headings: 1) ordinary children; 2) children especially sought.

The second category refers to children born after their parents have consulted the soothsayers, given alms and sacrifices, or employed other magical procedures.

Since the ordinary child is regarded as a spontaneous gift of God, his name is given by the father's close relatives unless some recent or remote event requires a name having particular significance.

551 Some examples of common ordinary names are Bila and Poko.

Names having special meanings are illustrated by the following examples.

Passektale (from passek, "insufficient," and talé, "resentment, hatred") means "I do not know what has caused the hatred which is felt for me."

Paratsida (from paraté, "to be unwilling," and sida, "truth") means "enemy of truth," a name intimating that people dislike the truth.

Dimpougoubnoma (literally, dima, "great chief, king"; pougbo, "to follow"; and noma, "profitable, good") is a name given to a child born of a mother given by a chief or one whose father has been given some important gift by a chief just before the child's birth.

842 [~~182~~] If a woman has no children after several years, the husband consults the soothsayers, makes offerings and sacrifices, employs
782 charms, and finally resorts to the tinsé ([sing.] tinkougri, from tinga, "earth," and kougri, "stone") or to the tiga (fetish tree). The woman goes with her husband to the possessor of the god. They take a rooster and some cowries. After they explain the object of their visit, the rooster is killed by the priest, and if the offering is accepted, the couple is dismissed with a formal promise that their prayers will be answered.

553 If, in due course, the wife is delivered of a child, the baby must be named Tinga, and his brothers and sisters will be named Timbila, Timpoko, etc., or if the tiga was appealed to, the baby must be called Tiga, and his siblings, Tibila, Tipoko, etc.

715 It also happens that after successive births, the babies die. Since
553 the Mossi, as we have noted, believe in reincarnation, they assume --

789 791 A number of grigris made by Mossi timisoba have passed through my hands. I shall list them and briefly describe them below.

1. A cow's tail at the tip of a wooden handle. When one is traveling during the winter season and a storm threatens, one need only wave the cow's tail and the storm does not burst. Once in the village, one stops waving it and the rain comes.

[757] 2. A hollow koba horn in which tamarind leaves, peanuts, and gum have been placed. In case of headache one opens the horn by its small upper lid, takes /592/ a pinch of the mixture, and swallows it. Then one does this again and also rubs a little on the forehead.

3. A small hoe with a chicken's head fastened to the handle. When during a dance one wishes to silence a singer who has been singing too long in order to sing oneself, one grips the hoe and covers the chicken's mouth. The singer is silenced, and in addition one sings perfectly.

[752] 4. A small hoe covered with leopardskin at the bend. If one is bitten by a snake, one cuts off a very small piece of the skin and puts it in a canari full of water. Then one rubs the bite with this water.

5. A deer horn with a fine red cord wrapped around it. Inside the horn there are tiégélara and karité seeds. The opening of the horn is closed with a wad of cotton.

If an enemy comes looking for a fight, one places some of the contents of the horn on a leather bracelet which is slipped on the left wrist. No harm can come to you, and the quarrel will immediately come to an end.

6. A deer horn containing crushed scorpions and pimento. If one wishes to become an indefatigable dancer, one need only rub one's back with the mixture.

7. Leather bracelets with powdered rice inside. People who wear one of those bracelets on the arm can be sure that the stick or sword which their enemy may attempt to use against them will break in his hands.

8. Iron bracelets covered with crocodile skin. Same purpose.

[842] 9. Cotton bracelets with honey and salt inside. If your wife is sterile, it is sufficient to put the bracelet in water in order to make her fertile.

789 791 777 10. A deer horn covered with leather and containing millet and pounded-bean flour. On the outside there is a hooked piece of iron.

842 How children are welcomed. —The Mossi are very happy to have children and want by all means to have some. This is indeed to their full advantage, since children work from the age of seven or eight, since they make sacrifices for their parents when the latter are dead, and since the daughters, by marrying, bring in gifts for the family. The more children one has, the happier one is.

842 789 "Under these circumstances," says Vadier, "a barren woman is very poorly regarded by her husband and not greatly esteemed by her neighbors. To overcome this sterility when it occurs, both spouses appeal to the gods. They both go to the tengasoba, the religious chief of the village, with a chicken, a goat, or a sheep, according to their means. The tengasoba cuts the animal's throat on a special stone, collects its blood, and boils it in a vessel along with various tree barks which have certain properties.

"This concoction is then given to the woman, who must mix it with her sarabou. If the spouses later have a child, they must, under threat of calling forth the vengeance of the divinity (the Earth, in [431] this case), offer the tengasoba a gift of 3,000 cowries if they had a boy or 4,000 cowries if they had a girl.

"The tengasoba also overcome sterility by cutting the animal's throat in the sacred grove (kango)."

847 Abortions. —Abortions nevertheless occur. Sometimes Mossi women cause an abortion in the event of an illegitimate pregnancy which occurred in the husband's absence. In addition, abortions are rather frequent among unmarried mothers. To conceal their lapse, [791] they appeal to the tipa or timisoba (makers of charms, medicines, and poisons) who give them a special brew of which they hold the secret.

[586] These practices are, of course, very poorly regarded by the Mossi. Married women who resort to them are turned out by their husband's. In addition, if a woman dies as the result of an abortion, her husband is likely to manifest joy and to state that the woman received a just punishment for her transgression. Finally, in former times after the [684] death of the guilty woman, the husband would go to the Moro Naba and denounce her lover to him. The naba confiscated all the lover's property.

843 Childbirth. —Among wealthy Mossi, the pregnant woman is treated with a certain regard. She does not work after the third month /252/ of pregnancy if this is her first, or after the sixth month if she has

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

rulers left the Dagomba region in the Gold Coast (present-day Ghana) during the 11th century and moved into the bend of the Niger River, carving out three large kingdoms and smaller principalities in the process. At the head of these still extant kingdoms are rulers (*Moro Nabas*) who hold feudal-like control of the provinces, districts, and villages which comprise their domains. A complex hierarchical administrative apparatus extends the power of the rulers into the smallest village, and funnels taxes and tribute back to them. French conquest modified this highly efficient system but did not greatly change it. The Mossi state apparatus rests on an economy which produces cotton cloth, horses, sheep, cattle, and goats, but the main support of this large population—one of the densest in the Sudan—is grain agriculture. Today, some Mossi districts still have as many as 70 persons per square mile.

The Mossi are divided into stratified royal, noble, and commoner patrilineages. Characteristic of this lineage system is a process by which royal sublineages descend serially until they merge with the mass of commoner lineages. Below the lineages there were once large non-Mossi groups of serfs and slaves, but these people have now been grouped into lineages and have become Mossi. Patrilocal polygynous extended family households, grouped into villages, form the basic Mossi settlement pattern. Marriages are arranged between unrelated persons through the agency of lineage members who establish "friendly" relationships. The two friends might ask their lineage heads for women to exchange as wives, or the "friend" who has received more gifts from his opposite number will give over a wife. Because only the older men have women and goods at their disposal, they are usually the ones who receive wives. The result is that most young men have no wives and must content themselves with occasional lovers until they inherit wives from lineage members. The Mossi have a great fear of incestuous relations which bring down the wrath of the ancestors (the *Keemsé*).

Ancestor veneration is at the core of Mossi religious behavior. The recent ancestors are notified, through sacrifices, of the important events in the lives of their descendants, and they are expected to aid in solving everyday problems. The ancestors also invoke their sanctions against antisocial behavior among their descendants. Once a year the Mossi people, in concert with the Moro Nabas, appeal to their individual and collective ancestors for good crops, large families, and for the preservation of the dynasty. Often associated with the ancestors as propitiatory agents are local deities called *Tengkougas* (sing. *Tenkougre*) or earth shrines, visibly manifested by clumps of trees, mountains, rocks, or rivers. *Tengsobas* or earth priests appeal to the Tengkougas on behalf of the local populations for help in sickness, for rain and good crops, and for children. When proper sacrifices are offered to the Tengkougas, their spiritual agents, called *kinkirsé*, enter the wombs of women and are born as children. Twins and children who die young are regarded as "evil" kinkirsé who entered a woman without being invited. Nevertheless, many persons consider twins as special gifts to parents in favor of the earth deities.

The earth itself, *Tenga*, is one of the principal deities of the Mossi. Tenga is

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

he received from them. This unequal exchange, plus the nobles' prerogative of seizing the wives of pagans, contributed to the increase of the Moslems.

The conversion of Mossi to Islam is sometimes accompanied by a rupture in the relationships between persons involved in "friendships" with a view of obtaining wives. A great quarrel developed in the district between a pagan chief and a recent convert who refused to give the chief a daughter promised as a wife. The chief became furious and claimed that the Moslem had broken a promise made years ago, but the Moslem claimed that it was against his new religion to give his daughter to a pagan. It is not true that Moslems in the village do not exchange wives with pagans, but the Moslems often try to convert their pagan friends so that the brides will not have to revert to paganism. The chief's difficulty was that he could not become a Moslem because of his ritual and ceremonial relationship with the ancestors. The Moslem men do not have such difficulties with their pagan wives because most women follow their husbands' dictates in religious and other matters. Many Moslem men attempt to prevent their wives from having sacrifices made to the ancestors, but if a woman really wishes such a sacrifice she can easily have it arranged through her pagan relatives. If a woman married to a Moslem refuses to observe Islamic practices, she is liable to divorce and runs the risk of having her children taken away.

Mossi anxiety over children is often instrumental in converting them to Islam. When a woman is barren or her young children die, she consults a soothsayer (*barga*). She is either told that her Tengkougre benefactor was not amply rewarded and recalled the children, or that her "Moslem" children (children who wished to be Moslems) were angry because they were given pagan names. In the latter case she is advised to make a gift to a Moslem and to ask her husband to build a Moslem prayer-circle outside his hut so that when her children "return" (are born again) they will see it. Finally, she is advised to give all her children Moslem names. I could discover no reason why the pagan soothsayers advise these anxious parents to adopt Islam, except that they hope that complicated prescriptions will be more efficacious. Nevertheless, so effective is this technique for gaining converts to Islam that even members of the family of the chief pagan priest are not immune to it. Furthermore, once a woman has a Moslem child, all her other children must be Moslems or they will die. A man whose children are all Moslem has no recourse except to adopt Islam if he wants a funeral, because his Moslem sons may not give him a pagan funeral.

Every Mossi, whether Moslem or non-Moslem, wishes a proper funeral, and now that travel has increased the fact of being Moslem or pagan is of great importance. Many young migrants to Ashanti have reported that their dead pagan comrades were unceremoniously disposed of, while the local Christians and Moslems took care of their dead coreligionists. But despite this fact, and the belief of administrators and missionaries, I found no evidence that the seasonal and other migration of Mossi youth to Ghana and the Ivory Coast have contributed very much to the spread of Islam. It is true that some of the thou-

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

Karême), celebrate the great festival of Ramadan and the lesser festivals, and aspire to make the pilgrimage to Mecca. Most of the Moslems can lead prayers, but only about one-tenth of their number can read and recite the Koran. However, today the masters (*karasambas*) of the 32 Koranic schools in the district are endeavoring to instruct the many boys and few girls in reading the Koran and understanding Moslem theology.

The Karême is observed by most adult Moslems in the community with the exception of invalids and working men. Moslems say that the fast is intended to turn the minds of the people to God, and they distinguish between the Moslems "of the mouth" who break the fast and those "of the heart" who fast until Ramadan. The crescent moon of Ramadan is greeted with guns and general rejoicing and the following morning the Moslems gather at the tomb of Ngado to give praises to God; during the rest of the day they pay homage to the chief and visit their friends. However, a change in the traditional observance of Ramadan is expected, because one of the Moslem leaders objects to the ceremony at the tomb of Ngado. He feels that some Moslems are beginning to regard the tomb of the first Moslem as an earth shrine or Tengkougre.

So far, only five of the more prominent Moslems in the district have made or are making the pilgrimage to Mecca. The first man made the voyage about seven years ago, and is now conducting a Koranic school in a neighboring district. His brother went to Mecca about two years ago and is now the senior *El Hadj* in the district. Of the two men who were on the pilgrimage when I arrived in the district, one has since died near the Red Sea and the other is still away. One other man left for Mecca and returned to the district during my stay. Most of the pilgrims now fly to Mecca; only two men followed the traditional route through Ghana, Kano, Lake Chad, the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan (now Sudan), and on to Mecca. In general, all pilgrims have used their own resources for the trip, but they receive some help from their lineage brothers and from the other Moslems in the district and in Ouagadougou.

The pilgrimage to Mecca represents the greatest event in the lives of the district Moslems. When the last pilgrim left, a great crowd gathered at his house and prayed for his safe journey, and some even accompanied him to Ouagadougou and remained there until he left. The Moslems and many pagans of the district, under the command of the district chief, cultivated his fields during his absence. And when the new El Hadj returned, a large crowd accompanied him to his house with shouts of joy. There he killed a sheep in thanksgiving, sprinkled the crowd with holy water from Mecca, and recounted his experiences. His listeners were impressed by his airplane flight and the description of Mecca, but they showed the greatest interest when he said that Mecca women covered their faces and that most Meccan men were monogamous. The local Moslems smiled when they heard this bit of news from one of their members, but I have seen them scowl when discussing the monogamous practice desired by the Christians.

The attitudes of Moslems differ very little from those of the other Mossi as regards children and polygyny. They say that they do not believe in the

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

794 efficacy of ancestor veneration and do not "kill chickens" to the ancestors, but
595 they maintain that it is a man's duty to have many wives so that he may have
● 842 children to succeed him. Furthermore, since Mohammed himself decreed that his followers may keep four wives, provided they treat each with the same degree of kindness, there is no conflict between Islamic tenets and Mossi practice of polygny. The average Moslem has two wives, but even the few men in the district who have more than four wives do not appear overly concerned about transgressing the tenets of their faith. Mossi Moslems have not adopted the [582] paternal parallel cousin marriage so common among other Moslems, and show surprise when told that Islam permits such marriages. However, they have modified their marriage behavior to harmonize with what they consider an Islamic tenet that "a man should not marry the widow of his father." The Moslem Mossi profess to look with horror on these marriages among their pagan brothers, preferring the levirate instead.

794 The Moslems' attitude toward the low status of women in Mossi society
562 has not changed, and in one respect it can even be said that this attitude has been strengthened. Many Moslem wives now cover their faces, and many El Hadjis have attempted to place their wives in purdah by preventing them from going to the market for fear they would come in contact with pagan men. The development of this practice is running counter to the growing emancipation of Mossi women, who have just begun to leave their villages for periodic visits to the larger towns. Nevertheless, the important fact is that the Mecca pilgrims have the opportunity to see Moslem women playing roles which are forbidden or unknown to Mossi women. And while it is true that the Mossi pilgrims would not easily adopt and foster monogamy, their receptivity to new Islamic beliefs and customs might have a liberating effect on their treatment of women. Once institutional and cultural changes have been accepted by the El Hadjis, they are likely to spread quite rapidly throughout the society because men who have visited Mecca are believed to have returned filled with wisdom and understanding.

797 Christianity came to the Mossi on January 24, 1900, shortly after French conquest. As noted above, the first missionaries were well treated, but the Mossi balked at the attempts at conversion. Nevertheless, by 1919 the White Fathers of the Catholic missions had established several centers, among which was the district of Manga where this study was conducted. Manga is considered a Catholic district, but there are only 3,000 Catholics out of a population of 124,000—which also includes 9,200 Moslems and five Protestants. [184] Thus, in contrast to Moslem Nobéré, which has no Catholics or Protestants, Manga, like most districts in Mossi territory, has a Moslem community.

The conversion of the Mossi in Manga to Catholicism follows the classical pattern of missionary proselytization in the country. Monsignor Socquet (1956:62) states that the Mossi always react to attempts at conversion with the statement: " 'We are looking at our chief,' that is to say, 'We will follow our chief in conversion as in all other matters. If he is favorable to it, then we will not go against his will.' " Socquet concludes: "It is thus understandable

8: Skinner E-5 (1955-1957) 1958
FA28 Mossi FA28

When a young Catholic receives a wife through the mission, he may visit her father and pay the customary respect by giving him kola nuts and brass coins. The father of a mission girl may accept or reject his son-in-law as he sees fit, but formerly he could not defy the power of the missions. 797 582 634

A pagan youth who wishes to marry one of the mission girls has to discuss the matter with the priests and swear publicly that he will become a Christian. Before 1946 the young man had to fulfill his promise or be intimidated by the chief and the missionaries until he relented or fled the district. Today, however, the priests usually abandon their efforts to obtain the conversion of the young men after three months have passed. In some cases the young men take their wives and move to other districts, and return only after the girls have given up Catholicism. Despite the lure of wives from the mission, not many young men become Christians on this account because the Mossi are still concerned primarily with family relationships and the effect that conversion would have on these relationships. [596]

The church's prohibition of polygyny is by far the most serious bar to the spread of Catholicism. Many men do not adopt Catholicism simply because they fear that monogamous marriages would not produce children. Father Paternot (Considine 1954:103) has cited a study purporting to show that Christian Mossi have more children than the pagans, but the ordinary people of the district would not accept the facts he presented. They cite their personal experience to the contrary. Dim Delobson (1934:136), a Mossi converted to Catholicism, states: 797 595 842

> A certain number of Christians of my acquaintance whose wives did not have children during the first years of marriage had recourse to magical practices in order to get children. These simple people thought that although they had an omnipotent God beside them, they could impudently—after all the good priests will not know about it—ask the little, but also powerful gods to grant them some material favors here on earth. When the gods given children were taken for Holy Baptism, they were given Christian names instead of the names of the earth shrines, and they did not wear magical charms which would have indicated to the priest the real state of affairs. Nevertheless, the children were bathed in water to which magical potions were added, and when the mothers went to visit their parents, sacrifices of chickens were given to the benevolent Tengkougas.

The Mossi's strong desire for children is admittedly one of the main reasons for leaving the Catholic Church so that they can take other spouses in addition to barren ones. The church has now belatedly recognized this problem and, knowing that it cannot prevent men from taking plural wives, allows them to come to church but prohibits them from taking the Mass.

Many cultural factors besides the desire for children make polygyny important for the Mossi, and make conversion detrimental to the functioning of their family system. Because of lineage opposition to their conversions, some converts are forced to establish nuclear households—a practice out of harmony with the normal rhythm of Mossi life. The reason for this disharmony is that Mossi women married to Catholics must work alone instead of with 595 797 182 [594]